1: Tew . E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Kangomba, used to persuade Nyanja to help in the sacrificial rite. When Kapeni in turn fled to Mount Soche from the Ngoni, and died there, the Yao addressed their offerings to him, not to Kangomba.[1] The word *Mulungu* has sometimes been interpreted to mean Supreme Being, God, Creator, but among the Yao it seems not to have a personal connotation. It was used to describe the agent in any mysterious event,[2] or the place where the ancestor spirits (*masoka*) were supposed to dwell. Daily life was full of acts of respect towards the ancestors, who were regarded as jealous of the living, and requiring constant propitiation.[3]

Sorcery

Accusations of witchcraft and measures for dealing with it play a dominant role in Yao social life. With certain exceptions nearly all diseases and deaths are thought to be caused by sorcery. The exceptional causes are: the hand of God, old age, the transgression of certain taboos, and battle wounds. If sorcery is suspected the relatives of the sick or dead man consult the diviner to identify the offender.

Yao (in common with the Maravi and many peoples of Central Africa) believe that sorcerers have a craving for human flesh, which they satisfy by killing with magic the victims of their malice and hatred. They acquire their magical powers by an apprenticeship, which might include incestuous relations with mother, sister, or mother-in-law, or sleeping on the grave of the mother for one night. The sorcerer then learns the medicines and finally demonstrates his power by killing a young relative by magic; he waits till the victim is buried, and then magically exhumes him for the secret feast with his fellow sorcerers. Each sorcerer who shares the flesh owes a debt to the one who secured the victim.

Charms are used as preventive measures against sorcery. When a diviner has diagnosed the cause of death as sorcery, retaliatory measures are taken. The headmen of the village could either call in the witchfinder to identify the offender or he could call in the diviner to take action against all the sorcerers in the village. After the diviner, *Mabisalila*, had revealed the guilty ones, they were challenged to take the poison ordeal to prove their innocence. If they died, the proof and the punishment were simultaneously accomplished. If they survived, the diviner was held to have been at fault and they were acquitted. The witch doctor was supposed to entice sorcerers to the graveside, and slay them with magic more powerful than their own.

The diviner's findings are to-day checked by the poison ordeal administered to a chicken. A sorcerer detected in this way might be asked to provide medicine for the man whose sickness he had caused, or after a death he might be compelled to pay compensation. If the accused is a village headman, he will not be summoned before a chief, but his brother will take the villagers away from the sphere of his influence, or he may be chased away from the district. Accusations of sorcery follow certain regular lines. Nearly all accusations fall on relatives. Diviners are consulted by matrilineal relatives of the sick or dead person, and the man most usually accused is the brother of the accuser, or the husband of his sister. Witchcraft is therefore a manner of expressing the hostilities latent in these relations, which are, in the Yao social system, full of tension.

[1] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 70.
[2] Hetherwick, 3, 1902.
[3] Heckel, 1935, pp. 14–15; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 58–75, 204–13.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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PLATE IV

A dispute in settlement at Chiwalo's hut. The assessor is sitting under the veranda behind the pole. A village headman can just be discerned in the shade under the veranda. The commoners sit in the sun.

(October 1948)

[facing p. 56]

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

but some also on having killed children by *ndaka* [1] (a disease caused by the mystical influence of sexual intercourse). Secondly, other cases not brought to the court are petty squabbles which do not involve heavy compensation. Examples of these disputes are personal quarrels, disputes over land ownership, petty theft and so on. The Native Authority's court handles mainly cases arising from adultery, which involve compensation varying from £1 10s. to £5; and theft and assault for which similar compensation may be payable. If the case is brought up to the chief's court there is a mechanism whereby the compensation may be enforced. Ordinarily, in those cases which are not tried in the court house, there is no legal sanction behind the payment of the compensation, so that if a man defaults in payment no legal pressure can be brought to bear on him. It is for this reason that such cases are tried in the court house.

The cases are heard by the court assessors who call the witnesses and cross-examine them. Sometimes a chief or his representative is in the court, as at Kawinga's court, but sometimes as in Chiwalo's court, the chief never comes to the court house at all. After the evidence is sifted, one court assessor takes the case to the chief and tells him about it. On the basis of the court assessor's analysis he awards compensation and imposes fines. The court assessor then takes this information back to the court house, reassembles the protagonists, and announces the chief's decision. The losing party has then the opportunity to appeal, first to the court of the Native Authority, if the case was tried in a Subordinate Native Authority's court, and then to the District Commissioner.

Cases tried by the chief in his extra-Administrative capacity are usually tried outside the court house. The same personalities take part in the trial but they act now with reference to a different set of values. The procedure is exactly the same, except that in Chiwalo's area the chief is present at the hearing. He sits somewhat aside from the main body of people but within hearing distance, weaving a mat or making nets while the case is being tried.

In minor cases, if either of the parties is dissatisfied with the decision, he may take the case up to the chief for arbitration and, theoretically, may then take it from him if he is a Subordinate

[1] See Chap. V, p. 112.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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compounds, especially in areas where there are man-eating lions,[1] so that it is no longer an infallible indicator of the hut-owner's rank. 554 351

Minor village headmen always allow their superiors to sit on a chair. If village headmen of commensurate status are present, chairs may be sought for them all. But a minor village headman never occupies a chair, even if one is available, in the presence of his superior. At a meeting, for example, a chief occupies a chair and so may his most important *nduna* or councillor. The more important headmen sit alone on separate mats, for a man only shares a mat with his equals, and then only rarely. Junior headmen, however many there are, have to try to squeeze themselves on to one mat or squat on the ground. 622 554 576

Important headmen also have the right of walking in front of their juniors. If there are three or four headmen returning from, say, a court case, they arrange themselves in the pathway in an order which reflects their rank. As they file down the narrow field paths the leader is the most senior among the group. After him come the other headmen and last of all the commoners. This order of precedence is also followed when initiands pass through the tribal initiation ceremonies. The sisters' sons and other matrilineal descendants of important headmen precede those of the less important headmen. At Chiwalo's hut also, I have noticed that the more important headmen sit under the verandah while listening to private cases. The less important headmen sit with the commoners under a shelter or out in the sun. [695]

I have been discussing the visible marks of prestige. But high rank also tends to carry with it some other privileges which are not immediately observable. The most obvious is Government recognition. I have already mentioned that under the 1912 Ordinance, village headmen were recognized by the Administration. These Administrative village headmen, who had certain duties to perform, were paid a small annuity and were in earlier days given a 'book' in which the tax payments could be recorded. To-day, the Yao still describe Government recognition as 'having a book'. Administrative village headmen derived more benefit from Government recognition than merely an 622 554 648

[1] The huts in Plate IX (*a*) and (*b*) are in Namwera area where there are man-eating lions. Most huts have compounds. A large proportion of huts in areas where there are no lions also have compounds.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

that Asubiya in her jealousy had gone to grumble to Bt. Ntalika about this. Rajabu (F20) who had heard about this called Cikoja and they assembled Bt. Amisa, Bt. Bwana Isa and Asubiya in Bt. Amisa's hut, and spoke to them about the dangers of backbiting. Cikoja remonstrated with the women saying, 'I don't want to hear about this again. When you love people do not love people who are strangers. Do not talk behind people's backs and bring war in the knots of your body-cloths.' 613 578 754

A few weeks after this, in June 1948, Aluwinda (F47), a 3½-year-old daughter of Asubiya, died. When her mother saw that the child was seriously ill she took her to her patrilateral relatives in Liwonde area. She had barely got there when the child died. The headman of the village sent a message back to Cikoja to tell him of the death. He in turn sent a message to Amidu and Rajabu and they went to the village to attend the funeral. After the first mourning feast three days after the funeral, Kaifa, the child's mother's elder sister's son, and Malawago, representing the village in which the child had died, went to a diviner who indicated that the cause lay in the backbiting of Asubiya about Bt. Amisa, but that the sorcerer was Bt. Ntalika. The tension now had reached almost breaking point and after about six months Bt. Ntalika moved out into Liwonde area without announcing that she was going.

At the end of December, Asubiya's son Selemu (F46), aged 4½, suddenly became ill one night. In the morning Amidu and Rajabu and Nkatawila (D20), who was the husband's marriage surety, went to a diviner. He indicated that the cause was a girls' initiation basket which Ayesi kept. This basket, the diviner said, kept losing its strength and it was only on the death of a close relative that it would regain power. They returned and when they got near the village they could hear the women keening. They agreed that the diviner was a liar and returned and got their money back. The body was buried on January 3rd, 1949. Asubiya now left the village without announcing her intention and went to complain to chief Kawinga. Cikoja in the meantime, noticing that Asubiya was not present at the funeral, sent out men to search for her. After two days Kawinga's chief court assessor, Masunda, brought Asubiya back to the village. He told Cikoja that he had cross-examined her and found that she said her elder sister was causing death because of her jealousy over the food. Masunda returned and some days later Kawinga wrote a letter to Cikoja telling him to come to the court village. This he did and was told to hold the mourning feast, but to take the people to the court village to hold the funeral meeting. There a divining party would be arranged and the cause of the death determined. 613 578 754 695

After the first funeral feast the people of Cikoja assembled at

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

Kawinga's court village. Masunda reviewed the events leading up to the calling of the meeting and asked Cikoja to give his statement. Cikoja replied, 'You say I am finishing the people. I do not deny it. If the people are being finished by my sister, then I am finishing them.[1] You may speak what is in your hearts.' Asubiya now made her statement. After this, Bt. Amisa was called out. She denied knowing anything about the case. Masunda at this point was about to send the case back to Cikoja when Matosa, a second arbitrator, asked who the marriage sureties were. Amidu came forth as the woman's surety. Matosa asked him to tell the court about Asubiya's marriage relationships. Amidu then reviewed the history of Asubiya's pregnancies. He pointed out that the first child had died.[2] The second one also died. The diviner had indicated that she had broken a sexual taboo and the child had died from *ndaka* as a result. The third child was still alive. The fourth had died recently. The fifth was the one about whom there was a case that day. He recounted how they had gone to a diviner and how he had indicated that the cause of the death lay in the backbiting which the person herself had done. Masunda cross-questioned Amidu about the *ndaka* medicine that was given and assured himself the complainant was satisfied that the second child had died of *ndaka* and not sorcery. Masunda then called Salimu since the woman was living at the old village site under Salimu's charge. Salimu, who works as a tailor in an Indian store some miles away, said that he did not have a great knowledge of the case. Cikoja said he had nothing to say. Eventually, after some hours of cross-questioning, Masunda decided that a divining party must be made up and the results of the divination reported to the court. Bt. Amisa now stood up and said she was prepared to undergo the poison ordeal to prove that she was not a sorceress. She said that she would go with them to the diviner to find out the cause of the death of the child. Masunda said that they would leave the matter at that. At the village they would have to decide on a divining party and they would have to give poison to a chicken to make sure that the divination was correct. After that Cikoja would have to report the matter to Kawinga and the case would be re-opened. Nyenje was at the inquest and said to Cikoja that if they were not relatives he would have other words to say to him about this business. As it was he did not see what he had to rejoice about. Cikoja said that he did not know, but that Nyenje should ask the owner of the village. Surprised, Nyenje said, 'Who is that?' Cikoja indicated Salimu.

[1] Cikoja is talking as a representative of his lineage here.

[2] The first death in a family is never divined for, because the Yao say that if this is done, it 'would chase the father away'.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

Salimu said that Cikoja ought not to speak like that because it only made things difficult.

Two days after this Cikoja called a meeting at Salimu's hut in order to choose a divining party. Eventually they chose Kanyenga, Asimama, Raisi and Musa. Musa was the witness for Kanyenga who represented the woman's party. Raisi represented the father's party, and Asimama went to be his witness. Cikoja gave them 5*s.* and they went to look for a diviner. Eventually they found one and Kanyenga opened the consultation. The diviner indicated that the cause of the death of the child was *litulula*.[1] The party paid him and looked for a place to sleep. The following day they sought another diviner. Kanyenga again consulted and was told that Bt. Ntalika and her son were sorcerers but that the mother herself was ill with *litukula*. Kanyenga rejected the *litukula* explanation and insisted on the sorcery of Bt. Ntalika and Cilimba. The diviner consulted again and said that the main cause of the death was the *litukula* and that the sorcery of Bt. Ntalika was added to the other. Asimama here insisted that the sorceress in reality was Bt. Amisa. The diviner rejected this. He said the best way to test the divination was to give poison to a chicken. The party was at a loss to know what to do. In two divinations, a *likango* was indicated twice, while sorcery was said to cloud the issue. They decided to give a chicken poison. They returned to Rajabu's hut in the village where he had married. Here they sent Rajabu to tell Salimu that they were about to test a chicken at the poison ordeal, but that he must not tell Cikoja. They gave two chickens poison, one for *litilesula* of the mother and one for the sorcery of Bt. Amisa. The *litulesula* chicken died, indicating that Bt. Amisa was innocent. When Cikoja was told this he refused to believe it and sent them to poison another two chickens. The result was the same. He now decided that he would take the divination to a distant place and chose to go to Ngokwe chiefdom. Kanyenga led the divination party again. They consulted the diviner and after much testing and retesting the diviner decided that the sorcerers were Bt. Ntalika and Cilimba and that the *litulesula* had nothing to do with it. He also specifically excluded Bt. Amisa. The diviner now told the father's two representatives to stay behind while the woman's representatives fetched Cikoja. When he came, the diviner revealed the result to him personally. Cikoja was at a loss what to do in this situation. Two divinations including poison tests had indicated that *likango* was the cause, a third and very exhaustive one had revealed Bt. Ntalika and her son. Neither had indicated Bt. Amisa.

[1] *Litulesula* is a type of pimple (the generic term for which is *likango*) which, when it comes to a head and bursts, causes the death of the last-born child.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

613 Eventually, in March, he decided to take the case up to Kawinga's
578 court. Cikoja was not willing to accuse Bt. Ntalika and Cilimba
754 publicly. Accordingly he went to Kawinga but he did not send for
695 Bt. Ntalika. When Masunda, the court assessor, heard this he refused to handle the case and told Cikoja that Bt. Ntalika had to be brought to court so that they could hear her statement. Cikoja and his people came back to the village and nothing more was done about it. In April, Rajabu wrote a letter to Cikoja telling him that he wanted to report him to Kawinga and to bring a charge for compensation against him because he had falsely accused his mother of sorcery.

I left the field in June and do not know what the result was.

The series of events are extremely complex. I have given only a summary of them. Nevertheless, the main themes in the history are clear enough. We see Cikoja as the representative of the lineage of any order whatsoever. We find in particular the opposition of the two collateral brothers, Kanyenga and Cilimba. They are the representatives of the two lineage segments in this situation. There is seldom any doubt about the affiliation of these two personalities. Consistently in the accounts of the divinations each rejects the diviner's finding if it accuses a member of his lineage segment. Note that the divination seance itself becomes a field in which the opposition of the segments is expressed. Kanyenga continued consulting diviners until finally he got the answer he wanted. His opponents rejected these findings and eventually even discounted the chicken ordeal. The diviners' findings and the results of the poison ordeals, therefore, are bandied about between the opposed groups, and though the whole procedure of divination and accusations of sorcery is directed towards the extirpation of discordant elements in the community, in fact, it is only a facet of the underlying cause of the tension—the opposition of segments in an ever-segmenting lineage.

613 In addition to the structural opposition of Kanyenga and
578 Cilimba there is a certain amount of tension among Cikoja's uterine sisters. Bt. Amisa, Asimama, Ayesi and Asubiya have all had children. Bt. Amisa is the senior and the relationships between her and any of the other sisters are difficult. In addition to this there is the tension between the generations seen in the attempts of the sons of Amisa to bring a compensation claim

3: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Again, charm medicine may be contained in various articles which are also generally worn round the neck. The teeth and claws of the beasts of prey are so employed, generally arranged in pairs bound together so as to form a crescent and suspended from a string. The teeth of crocodiles, lions, leopards, and the claws of the same beasts and of some large birds of prey are thus employed. The teeth etc., are in themselves charms against injury, probably against what one might call homologous injury. The idea of stuffing them with medicine is probably a secondary consideration, a process of fortification of the charm so that its use comes to have a more powerful influence. It is interesting to see of late years that the native, recognizing the decorative value of these crescent-shaped amulets, has begun to copy them in lead and ivory. A series of these of graduated size is worn as a necklace by women.

When a medicine-man is consulted, part payment is made in advance, "payment to go and dig medicine (roots)." The rest of the payment is made when the cure is effected. Should a patient not be satisfied with his treatment and wish to consult some other medicine-man, he pays to the first a quarter of the fee he would have paid if his cure had been effected; this is called "paying him to get his medicine away." Unless this is done, should he recover later, he will be liable to claims for full fees from all of the medicine-men he has consulted; each will say his own medicine has gone on acting and has effected the cure. A medicine-man may take a case he is treating into his own house.

In prescribing medicine, very particular instructions are given with an embargo on certain things which may or may not have some use and significance. A medicine-man in 1891 at Malemya's, who inoculated every one in the forehead with bullet proof medicine, said that no one must step across a *wuriri* (pestle for pounding grain), and no one must eat the leaves of the sweet potato.

A medicine-man always partakes of part of the decoction he is giving to a patient to show that it is harmless; I think these preparations are mostly inactive. I should hate to sample all the castor oil I have prescribed, though many natives have had suspicions about me when I have not done so.

Poisons. Though there are a large number of species in this country, both vegetable and animal, from which poison might be extracted, those that have gained any reputation among natives and have come under my observation are but few in number. *Mwai* (*Mwabvi* Chin.) "the ordeal poison," is the bark of *Erythrophloeum guineense*. The natives distinguish two varieties of *mwai*, the two trees differing slightly in leaf, flower and bark; *mwai* is the *Erythrophloeum guineense*, the second variety known as *mperanjilu* is doubtless an allied species. *Mwai* is the poison employed in the poison ordeal.[1] It is administered in a poisonous dose as a decoction of the bark, recovery or otherwise depending on whether or not the poison is voided by vomiting. Natives give as the symptoms headache, giddiness, disturbances of vision, vomiting and purging, with slowing of heart beat. *Mper-*

[1] Vide infra, p. 298.

3: Stanmus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

754 A *wusuí* may be met with under different circumstances. An educated native told me of his experience one night when riding a bicycle back to a township where he was employed. Coming along a smooth-hoed path with his lamp alight, he became aware of the presence of something in the bush in front and at the side of him. Suddenly his lamp was smashed and he was left in darkness, while something pushed him over so hard that he fell off his cycle. Picking himself up, he started to wheel his cycle on, when there appeared on the path in front, figures who, rubbing their hands together to produce a phosphorescent glow, held them up in front of the boy's face. He was, however, not molested further, and coming to a group of huts he knew, he went in and made inquiries as to the cause of his experiences and was promptly told that there was a man living in a hut near the spot on the path where they had occurred who was supposed to be *wusuí*. Such a story is given for what it is worth. The boy was about twenty-two years old, a highly educated native with an intelligent appreciation of the worth of superstition.

Some *wusuí* demonstrations can have no object but to strike terror and keep up the prestige of the *wusuí* class. Mr. Muggridge wrote me, "A boy of mine was certainly attacked and squeezed about the neck by a man whom he described as naked, huge, and slightly luminous, on the road at the back of my house in Bisatyre. The boy was strolling up and down in the dusk and had nothing about him to provoke robbery; he was almost choked before he managed to let out a yell which determined his assailant to let him go. He was not a local boy and no theory of personal spite was supportable. I thought and still think that the motive was to show that even the Resident's servant twenty yards from the Resident's house was not safe from *wusuí*." It seems possible that some natives with intent to rob had pretended to be *wusuí* but recognising that their victim was likely to cause trouble, they went no further.

[824] It is said that the phosphorescence is produced by rubbing in the hands two vegetable substances from local trees and that this is the method the *wusuí* adopt to announce their presence.

754 **Poison Ordeal.** As I have said above, when anyone sickens or dies, the illness or death
● 695 is likely to be considered the work of some one who is *wusuí*, and action will be taken by the relatives to find him out. The proceedings in such a case where witchcraft is suspected will now be briefly sketched; though I give an account of a case from beginning to end as if it occurred at the present time, it must be understood that the giving of *wusuí*, the ordeal poison, is now much less common than formerly. A man becomes ill in some village and does not get better, so the caster-of-lots is consulted. The sick man's relatives or friends go to the [787] lot-caster and approach the subject indirectly by asking him his advice about a number of imaginary cases; they may say, "Things have been stolen from our house." The lots are cast and the caster replies, "No, you have not come to see me about that." This may go on for hours before the facts of the case proper are mentioned to him. Finally, they tell him that one of their relatives is ill in the village, the lots are consulted and advice is given

3: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT? Yao FT?

as to procuring medicine for him from a medicine-man. If the caster of lots is suspicious that some one has caused the illness, he will at the same time add, "Let us and so pray," mentioning the name of the man whom he suspects. Following the advice given, the medicine-man is consulted. He promises to get medicine for the sick man and goes into the forest to search for it. Having returned, he prepares his decoctions and having first partaken of a little himself, he gives it to his patient with further instructions. The friends of the sick man having returned to the village, indirectly ask the man on whom suspicion has been cast to pray for the sick man saying, "He is covered by some spirit." The man prays, sometimes using *mkapasi* and beginning *shindo! shindo!* "please! please!" and goes on to ask *Mlungu* to take away the spirit which has covered the sick man, adding that he himself is innocent of any ill doing against the man and that any grudge he may have had against him is now forgotten.

If the sick man recovers, well and good, but should he die, there is more to be done. The morning following the burial, the relatives go to the *chief* and in answer to his inquiry of what they are going to do, they say they must again consult the caster-of-lots. They will choose some one who lives a long way off and is not cognizant of the death of their relative: those who go to him have not been shaved after the funeral. Much the same business is gone through as on the first occasion but, in the end, the caster-of-lots is told that they suspect some one unknown to have brought about the death of their relative. The names of all the possible persons are given, the lots cast in each case and, eventually, one is picked out as the guilty man; the caster-of-lots saying, "If I am not telling the truth, you can test my words by giving *mussi* (ordeal poison) to a fowl; if it does not die, come back and break up all my properties."

He may have gained information from his lots that the suspect is a man of power gained by some special rite, e.g. the midnight bath on the ant hill, in which case he will insist that the fowl poison-ordeal must take place on an ant hill or he will give other specific instructions. On the way back, the relatives will buy two fowls; *mussi* will be prepared by a boy who has not passed through his initiation ceremonies, and two of the party will be chosen as pleaders, one for the deceased, the other for the accused. One fowl is then pointed to represent the accused and the poison administered according to the conditions laid down by the lot-thrower, while the two pleaders give injunctions to it, one saying, "You are guilty; you shall die"; the other, "You are innocent and you shall show your innocence by vomiting the poison and recovering." If the fowl dies, a third man cuts off its head, saying, "I am the butler of the dead." *Mussi* is then administered to the second fowl to ascertain whether any other persons are involved. The head of the first fowl is singed, stuck on a stick and carried back with the party towards their village. A little way outside, they halt in the bush, and send word to the headman that they are returning. He then comes out privately to see them, asking what has happened, and is told all the events in sequence.

3: Simmons D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Tan FT7

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One of the group is chosen to go in the morning and summon some one to appear on behalf of the accused man. He and the headman join the party in the bush when the whole of the case from the beginning of the deceased's illness, is again related, ending with the brief but and dramatic statement of the name of the accused, whereupon the *kwé*'s head on its stick is planted in the ground opposite to the man who has appeared for him as he squats listening to the story. The man who has been called to defend the accused, though the latter may have no particular claim on his kindness, is in honor bound to do his best. As the *kwé*'s head is planted opposite him, he will shift quickly to one side, protesting the innocence of the accused. All then adjourn to the village to put the case before the *chief*. One of the men acts as prosecutor, again going through the whole case, calling witnesses and others to aid him in speaking. The accused is then defended by the man chosen for the purpose, assisted by others whom he asks to help him. They may speak for a week or more. The *chief* decides the case, and the result will be communicated to the defendant by his pleader.

If he is found guilty of causing the death of the deceased, he must pay the fine inflicted or if he has been accused actually of *nsasi*, he may have to undergo, or may offer to undergo, the *nsasi* ordeal poison himself or the test may be made with a dog tied to the leg of the accused man. If the ordeal is satisfactory to the defendant, the man claims compensation for wrongful accusation. If he dies with *nsasi*, his relatives have to pay compensation for the crime he is thereby shown to have committed.

[792] If either party is dissatisfied with the *chief*'s decision, recourse may be had to a hearing before another *chief*, the first being very glad to be rid of the case. The second gives judgment quickly. If the case goes on to a poison-ordeal, a day is fixed and the accused is taken out to some spot two or three miles from the village where a hut is built called *ndomo* (place of torture). Accompanied by the two pleaders, he remains here for several days. People from the village come out and attempts are made to make him confess any accomplices; houses are fired over *his* and when very hot are put into the accused's hands and his feet shaved over them, or they are put in a cloth which is fastened round the perineum, or bamboo sticks are arranged one on either side of the head and tightened by a string.

The third day, natural undyed bark-cloth is obtained and men go out to fetch the *nsasi* poison, two men from each party, the prosecutor and the defendants. One man sent by the prosecutor has actually to take the bark from the tree, while the others look on to see fair play. The bark can only be taken from the east or west side of a tree; it may not be cut with a knife or axe or be pulled off, but must be cut with a stone and allowed to fall; only a piece which falls with the inner surface lying upwards is taken. Any of the party may carry it but they must on no account leave one another. Having returned, they hide the *nsasi*.

On the appointed day, the big drum is sounded and a crier goes round saying that everyone who wants to see *nsasi* drink *nsasi* must go to the appointed place. Every large

3:Stanner D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

village had its regular place of torture and *masui* drinking, two or three miles from the village. Those used by Makanya, the old Zomba *chief*, may still be seen. 754

A *dimo* way is made two feet broad and fourteen feet long in the bush and here the accused takes up his position attended on either side by the two pleaders, the defending pleader on the right, the prosecuting on the left. Facing east or west or following the directions originally given by the *master-of-ceremonies*, that is, taking up the position in which the accused is supposed to take a midnight bath, or practise some rite under a tree or an ant hill, etc., he is given a dose(tion) of *masui* to drink from a gourd. This dose(tion) is made on the spot, the bark being pounded up on a stone by one of the prosecutors. The accused must have had no food that day. He then starts to walk up and down the short cleared path with the two men, one on either side of him, the one saying, "Now you have drunk *masui*, you shall die as you deserve; you did it in *fo-and-fo*," the other denying the accusations, saying, "He shall vomit the poison." He is watched by the assembled crowd who note the various symptoms of which vomiting is the first and said to be the most characteristic. After this has gone on for some time, they watch for what is called the *nyungo* which is said to be "a ball of bile formed in the mouth and expelled by vomiting so that it bursts on reaching the ground but not before", followed often by a second ball, twenty minutes later. Should this be expelled, recovery may be expected, foreshadowed by clearing of the vision. If he recovers, he is indeed a wonderful man and is hailed on all sides. The women trill with their tongues and shout, and he is carried back in triumph; the defending pleader will swagger about and demand anything he wants for his client.

A fatal termination is characterized by little and non-forcible vomiting. Purging is common but said to be painless. Vision is affected and as time goes on, the spectators ask what he can see, "Do you see that over there?" indicating a hill. If he makes mistakes, then they say, "Ah, he is going to die!"

The poison may not take full effect for three or four hours. The end is ushered in by a last stage when the legs become weak; he staggers, then unable to stand any longer, falls to the ground dead, executed by the onlookers who rush in and hurl stones upon the body, crushing it. The relatives take the mangled corpse and lay it on logs covered with grass in the bush. No other covering is permitted. It may be placed in a tree by people acting as such. Burial is forbidden. [766]

In some cases *masui* used to be burned, not being given the chance of the poison trial. This took place at a recognized spot like *odumo*. The last man to be burned by Makanya was Mtukula in 1902. Burning was also a punishment in some bad cases of murder. Such was the fate of Chingale. The man was put in a *dimo*-stick, a pile of logs was built round him and then set on fire. [683]

Witch-finder. In addition to ordeal poison, another method of discovering a *masui* is by "smelling out." If a number of people have died in a certain village, the inhabitants may begin to think that there is a *masui* among them, and procure the services of a *mkondio*. 754 695 791

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M'chimbiko is a Chinyanja word from *ku-bika*, "to hide," referring to his custom of hiding in the village; the practice is originally Mang'anja, since adopted by the Yao. *M'chimbiko* is often a woman and may be young.[1] She comes to stay in the village unknown to the people, lives in a watch house in the gardens and is said to go about at night when she is able to summon *wanwi* persons from their houses. The fee for her services is paid beforehand. Later, the villagers are assembled and going round the company holding out flour in her hand, she calls upon *Ile-and-Ile* as the guilty man saying, "This is his 'night-name.'" The villagers all answer, "There is no one of that name in the village." She then goes round again and throwing the flour over the accused, utters his ordinary name and runs off into the bush, not to appear again. The accused may then offer to take *wanwi* (ordeal poison) to prove his innocence or if it is a case of illness only and not death, he may be treated by a medicine man, the process being called *ku-kupisila*, "to take evil things out of."

A *wanwi* man is sometimes said to renounce his old practices and may then be received into the company of *mbimbila*. A famous *mbimbila* near Zomba affirms that he used to be *wanwi*. The mode of action of *mbimbila* varies greatly with different men; for some the ceremony is quite a minor matter; in other cases, it is an important affair.

Witch-destroyer. Where death is suspected to have resulted from *wanwi*, steps may be taken immediately to catch and kill the *wanwi*. For this purpose, the help of the *wanda jasambola* is sought. *Ku-sambola* means "to break off the end of a stick"; it appears to be both a Chinyanja and a Chiyao word. The word refers to the practice of the professional witch-killer who is supposed to run a stick through the anus up the bowel of his victim and then break it off, leaving part inside. The *jasambola* having been informed of the approaching funeral hides in the bush near the graveyard and watches the interment. After everyone has gone, he is free to put in operation that for which he has been called. The following *modus operandi* is related of a celebrated *wanda jasambola* called Angwi of Zomba. The water in which the corpse had been first washed was obtained and put in an earthenware dish. He also provided himself with a gourd containing medicines and some stones, and another gourd filled with poison made from crocodile gall to anoint the *sambola* sticks. He also had a small antelope's horn containing medicine which when smeared on the head rendered him invisible, together with the stalks of a species of millet called *sabubwe* which shook its grains at a touch, and a whistle made from the horn of a small antelope, the *ulili*.

So provided, he proceeded to the grave, around which he drew a ring with medicine contained in still another horn. Within this circle, all else safe. This was followed by a square immediately around the grave with a stone from the gourd placed at each side, north, south, east and west. The plate of water was placed on top of the grave. The *wanda jasambola* then anointed himself with the medicine which made him invisible to the *wanwi*

[1] Cf. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

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and sitting within the circle, he blew his whistle which was irresistible to the *mumi* man who was then induced to come out of his house. When he had reached the grave, the water was sprinkled over him by the *fumukwiza* with the millet stalk from the dish on the grave, or he was struck with the gun's tail; in either case, he fell to the ground senseless. He was then ready to be dealt with. The *mkwiza* sticks, small bamboos filled with crystalline poison, were pushed up the anus and broken off to liberate the poison. Sticks might also be inserted behind the ear or in various other spots. The *mumi* was then beaten to wake him up; he ran off to his own village and there, a little later, he sickened and died, telling no one the cause. After death, the *mwiko* when preparing the corpse of the hitherto unsuspected *mumi*, might find the end of the stick projecting from the anus or see the punctures elsewhere with the medicine adhering to them, and the man was revealed in his true colors.

At Mwiche's village, there was a man called Lisonga who professed to be able to extract the poison injected by the *fumukwiza* by causing his patients to undergo a vapor bath and to drink certain decoctions. This man would never reveal the name of anyone who came to him for treatment but would brag that "trade was brisk." The symptoms of the mortal malady caused by the *mkwiza* are said to be intestinal obstruction with tremendous distention of the abdomen (peritonitis).

Of this same village, a story is told which, if not true, at all events illustrates the sort of thing that is believed. As has been mentioned above, whenever the *fumukwiza* blows his little horn, any *mumi* will hear it and thinking it is one of their band calling, will go to meet him. A woman of this village told how she and her husband were sitting over the fire while the evening meal was cooking, when he suddenly jumped up and said he must go outside for a bit. She remonstrated and asked him to wait for his food, but he hurried off. Later he returned, complaining of feeling very ill; his belly swelled up and he died soon after. It was said that this man was very friendly with a woman named Ahibi and that when he went out into the bush, he was heard calling in a low voice, "Is that you, Ahibi?" When his body was examined, two punctures were found on the left side of the chest. It was supposed that it was Ahibi he expected to meet and with her enjoy a cannibalistic repast, whereas it was a *fumukwiza* who had called and killed him.

This brief outline of a case of sickness, suspicion of witchcraft, death, and the consultation with the caster-of-lots, the witch-finder, ordeal poison, death, and the catching of the cannibal witch, has been given as a more or less connected story in order that it may be more easily understood. Some further details concerning the lot-caster, witchcraft, etc., must be added.

Lot-casting. Medicine men who cast lots were at one time fairly plentiful and were consulted on many matters, often of small importance from a European point of view. Chief of all were questions of witchcraft. The *modus operandi* varied in different cases. In sowing and other important matters, the medicine man always used the *chisungu* (divining in-

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spoke is invariably used in character and Chinyanja is the language always used. It is doubtless a case of what we should call ventriloquism. The custom is evidently of Mang'anja origin but in great favor with the Yao.

Divination also plays an important part in tracing thieves or stolen property or in picking out from a number of people anyone guilty of some crime. Several modes of procedure may be adopted. The *chisango* called *ndundo* may be used as the *chisango cha chipeta* (*chipeta*, a kind of basket). Medicine in the form of certain roots is placed on the ground and covered by the inverted basket on which is placed the *ndundo*. Each person in turn is requested to lift the basket and the guilty one is at once revealed by his inability to budge the basket off the ground. This method may even be used to reveal a man guilty of sexual.

Other methods of divination include a kind of trial by ordeal somewhat similar to a boiling water ordeal. *Kasendula* (from *ku-sendula*, to tramp round, referring to the peregrinations made in search of what is lost, or *sambizulo*, the Chinyanja word from *ku-londa*, to follow on the footsteps of) is the name of the witch-doctor who searches for stolen property or traces the thief. The same man may be called *mulowondolo* in Chinyanja (from *ku-wondola*, to reveal) when he uses his instrument to detect in a crowd the person guilty of some crime. The *kasendula* uses the horn of a kudu stuffed with appropriate medicine, the actual *mise en scène* and methods adopted varying somewhat with different practitioners. The practice I believe to be a Mang'anja one and I think most of the operators were Anyanja men and not Yao, though the Yao, as with other customs, adopted the system fully. In my district, the *kasendula* was usually armed with a rattle; when the horn indicated the guilty individual, he intimated the fact to the assembled crowd by throwing flour over him.

When a search is to be made for stolen property, the horn is put into the hands of four men, alternate men pressing down and pulling up on the long horn, while the medicine man stands by, operating his rattle and exhorting the horn to do its work of revelation. I know a man who has on several occasions assisted in holding the horn; he said it simply seemed to drag him on in a series of jerky movements, sometimes going very fast, at other times moving slowly, dragging the holders " along the footsteps of the thief with the stolen goods " in and out of the house, through the bush, and across streams, until suddenly the horn dropped from their hands to the ground, where on digging, the stolen goods were found buried. (Cf. table turning, planchette, etc.)

A good description of *kasendula* under the headings *mulowondolo* and *nawindula* is given by Garbutt,[1] who describes the Mang'anja operators. In this same article, he makes the mistake of describing as *nadzindiu*, the *fumukatolo*. As I have stated above, the *fumukatolo* is an order of medicine men who trap the man who is in an *mzimu* while in the *mzimu* state, but the *ndzindiu* points him out while he appears as an ordinary man of the village.

[1] H. W. Garbutt, "Native customs in Nyasa," (Man, London, 1911, vol. 11, p. 81-87).

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The dog.....*mwe mwa!* (as in hut).
The cat.....*ngwa!*
The snake.....*kukúlilu!*
The lion.....*ku ku ku!*
The duck.....*kwa kwa kwa!*
The cow.....*mwa!*
The sheep.....*kwi!* (as in kite).
The goat.....*mbi!*
The dove.....*mu mu!*
The lion.....*ng'wanang'wi!*

195 578 Among the Yao, abuse and obscene language are rare; expressions which appear in other languages all the world over are only used on great provocation and commonly with dire results. This, too, is opposed to the ways of neighboring tribes, the Anyanja and Angoni, who freely make use of such expressions as "*Ngini pa mukui!*" and "*Ningo wa mukui!*" "The pudenda of your mother! Clitoris of your mother!"

The following explanations of abuse and expressions of obscenity will be seen to follow very closely upon those in other countries.

1. *Mwinikanu!* (to a girl or woman), *mbuluki!* (to a boy or man) means you are a person who has not been to your *Unyago*, and therefore "you are without manners!"

2. *Mwana mkongwe!* an expression to a child meaning "you little wretch," "you nasty little thing!"

3. *Akubila kwi kpuno!* he eats with the back of his hand, he is uncircumcised, i.e. "he is a dirty person!"

4. A man with big ears is hailed "look at your ears like a lemur!" (*Likwaku*, a lemur).

A Yao woman seldom or never resorts at or uses bad language to a man nor the converse; the woman, however, is not behindhand in the art of bitter complaining and nagging.

[207] Pulling down the lower eyelid with the finger accompanying some exclamation has exactly the same significance as in European countries, "I am not so green as I look!"

Kwampa is to make a sound like "pish" with the mouth, and is a great insult, for which a man will fight.

Screwing of the lips to one side as in the action to get rid of the sour skin of a fruit, *ku-mun'g'wapa* is an expression of contemptuous disgust.

● 695 539 The similarity to European ways is again seen in swearing or taking oath. A Yao swears by the spirits of his ancestors or by a child:

"*Chirisi cha Mulungu!*"
"(By) the grace of Mulungu!"

or he may indirectly name some ancestor:

"*Ngakumbila kyangu!*" or "*Ngakumbila kulaka!*"
"I swear by the spear!" "I swear by the lion!"

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meaning I swear by the spirits of him who was killed with a spear (or by a gun), referring to some one well known to have in such wise met his end, or again:

"*Kyakumbila kumuka kwa mundu!*"
"I swear by the fetish of (all) men!"

an equivalent to swearing by the day of judgment; or again a man may swear by his own death:

"*Libilo lingingila n'nayikumila!*"
"Earth may it enter (my) ears!"

or he will intimate that his throat should be cut by drawing his finger across the neck, if he does not speak the truth.

There is a glib around Zomba in swearing. A man saying, "I swear so and so," is asked, "By whose grave-house? *Musti wa chani?*" The man who is in reality only bluffing will say, "*Chakuma!* By Chakuma's grave!" Chakuma a small headman near Zomba of whom much fun is made.

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Native stories. The fables or stories found among the Zomba Yao are many of them variations of well known tales, and have been collected to some extent by others. I only propose to add here five translations of a few I do not remember to have read elsewhere.

The Hare and the Elephant

The elephant made a big garden and planted sugar-cane. When it had grown, he asked all the other animals to come and partake of it with him. When they had all assembled, the buffalo, the eland, and all the other antelopes, the zebra and all the smaller animals, the elephant invited them to eat. He made one condition, however, anyone who, having chewed the sugar-cane, made a sucking sound as he swallowed the juice before spitting out the fibrous part would be killed (*ku-jonga*, Chin. *ku-gunda*, to suck, making the sound "ehhheh").

So the animals all sat in a long line and the buffalo started chewing his piece of sugar-cane, but when he tried to get all the juice out of his piece, he went "ehhheh!" so the elephant twisted his head till he was dead, and then picking him up, threw the carcass aside. The same fate followed for the eland, for all the antelopes and the lion, so that the other animals became afraid and would not volunteer to eat the sugar-cane but went away and the carcasses of the dead animals were buried. The elephant then appointed another day and invited the animals to come again and try.

That day, the hare came and made salutation by clapping to the elephant who demanded what he wanted, so the hare replied, "I have come to eat sugar-cane." "You know my rule," said the elephant. "Yes," said the hare, "I know your rule but I want some sugar-cane." So he was given some while all the other animals looked on to see what would happen. "Please," said the hare to the elephant, "may I have the outside part stripped